



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Chair

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March 10, 2023

Sarah Carroll, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, 9th Floor
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 229-231 West 14th Street, Manhattan

Dear Chair Carroll,

On February 21, 2023, reflecting the unanimous vote of Chelsea Land Use Committee, Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4), by a vote of 36 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible, voted to recommend that Our Lady of Guadalupe Church at 229-231 West 14th Street be designated a landmark for its historical and cultural significance. A Request for Evaluation to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) was submitted by Andrew Berman on behalf of Village Preservation earlier this month. Designation of this significant site would align with LPC's Equity Framework instituted 2021, by recognizing Hispanic history in New York City.

Architectural, Historical, and Cultural Importance

Our Lady of Guadalupe, also known as Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and Iglesia Católica Guadalupe, bears enormous significance as New York City's very first church for a Spanish-speaking congregation. Dedicated to serving the estimated 45,000 Spanish-speaking Catholics of the archdiocese, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church was opened under Archbishop Michael Corrigan in 1902 at 229-231 West 14th Street in two ca.1850 brownstones combined to house the church on their lower floors. The church was remodeled in 1921 with the present Spanish Colonial Baroque façade addition by Gustave E. Steinback.

The transformation of these buildings from residences to a church is noteworthy and distinctive within New York City. The church boasts a double-height sanctuary, complete with a monumental entrance, side chapel, balcony, and clerestory, as well as a limestone Spanish Colonial Baroque façade with elaborate detailing and scrollwork recalling the parish's Iberian heritage.

The Church bears enormous historical and cultural significance as a tangible remnant of the once-thriving “Little Spain,” an immigrant community that established itself in the area near the Hudson River south of 14th Street. Our lady of Guadalupe was founded as the national parish for all Spanish-speaking Catholics in New York City. It was also the first apostolate of the Assumptionists in the United States, who came to America in 1891. Despite their roots in France, the Assumptionists were deeply involved in the creation of Catholic ministries for Spanish speakers in New York, also establishing the second Spanish congregation in the city, Our Lady of Esperanza, which opened in 1912 on 156th Street.

The church and the building are also historically significant for their strong connections to several important figures of the 19th and 20th centuries, including:

- Parishioner Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement and candidate for sainthood in the Catholic Church.
- The Delmonico family, founders of Delmonico’s restaurant, were the residents of 229-231 West 14th Street before the building’s conversion to a church. Delmonico’s is considered America’s first fine dining restaurant and the cornerstone of what became a vast hospitality empire.
- Architect Gustave E. Steinback, who over the course of his career designed more than thirty buildings for the Roman Catholic church. Other New York City Landmarks designed by Gustave E. Steinback include Our Lady Queen of All Saints Church (1910-1915) and the Church of the Blessed Sacrament (1917).

Following the church’s founding, several other Hispanic institutions opened nearby on West 14th Street, including Casa Maria (a Spanish Settlement house run by the Servants of Mary), La Nacional: The Spanish Benevolent Society, St. Raphael’s Spanish Immigrant Society, and the Spanish American Workers Alliance. When Our Lady of Guadalupe opened its doors, the city had a relatively tiny Spanish-speaking population. Now nearly 30% of its population, or over 2.4 million people, claim Hispanic heritage—more than any other city in the United States.

Recent History

After a century at 229 West 14th Street, the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe consolidated with the much smaller St. Bernard’s parish in 2002. The new Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Bernard, or La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en San Bernardo, began meeting at the St. Bernard’s Church building at 328 West 14th Street.

On January 1, 2023, the Archbishop of New York issued a decree on the relegation of the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, located at 229-231 West 14th Street, signaling the

church will be deconsecrated and deaccessioned by the Archdiocese of New York. The recent decree puts this vital historic and architectural resource in imminent danger.

In his decree, Archbishop Timothy Dolan stated, “negotiations that may lead to the sale of the property may start.” Because of this deconsecration, LPC must act urgently to prevent any harm to this important historic and cultural site, which could result from its sale.

The Property

The property consists of two adjacent lots. The site of 331 West 14th Street (The property) is 3,124 square feet, with a frontage of 25 feet. The seven-story building covers the entire lot and has a total gross area of 13,555 square feet. The site of 229 West 14th Street (the Church) is 3124 square feet, with a frontage of 25 feet. The four-story building covers the entire lot and has a total gross area of 7,812 square feet. The building’s façade is remarkably intact. The floors above the church are residential. The building sits between other multi-family residential buildings on a mixed-use block. Both sites are in a C6-2A district which permits commercial uses (6.0 FAR), residential uses (6.02 FAR) and community facility uses (6.5 FAR). The existing building and church cover the full lot.

Analysis

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a rare architectural remnant of Little Spain surviving in the contemporary built environment. Its historical and cultural significance to Hispanic New Yorkers is well documented and storied. There is a precedent for designating the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a Landmark. In May, 2021, LPC designated Holyrood Episcopal Church-Iglesia Santa Cruz in Washington Heights as part of its Equity framework commitment and stated that the church “fills a gap in representation of New York City’s Latino community.” Similarly, the Church of our Lady of Guadeloupe has stood as a beacon for the Catholic Hispanic population citywide and must be designated to continue to tell the stories of *all* New Yorkers.

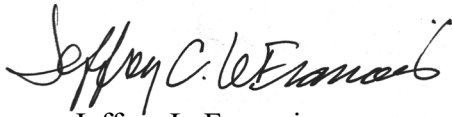
As LPC stated in its Equity Framework, “New York City’s diversity is its greatest strength, essential to its significance as a thriving cultural, intellectual, artistic, and economic center.” The Hispanic experience has been and continues to be central to New York. The lives, history and culture of New York’s Hispanic residents and leaders should continue to be recognized in landmarks and historic districts throughout the city.

CB4 Recommendation

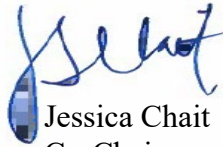
CB4 urges the Commission to expedite the Request for Evaluation of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church for designation as an individual New York City Landmark. It is of critical historic, cultural, and architectural significance. The church was determined eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places in 2011 for its association

with important historical events, and for its embodiment of a specific architectural style by an architectural master. Furthermore, the church undoubtedly meets the criteria established for consideration under the Landmarks Preservation Commission's Equity Framework. Our Lady of Guadalupe's continued cultural importance to the history of the Hispanic population in Chelsea, and the city as a whole, is undeniable.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFrancois
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4



Jessica Chait
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee



Kerry Keenan
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee

cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, New York Senate
Hon. Deborah Glick, New York Assembly
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
Village Preservation